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## **3.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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The proposed Town of Corte Madera General Plan would replace the existing 1989 General Plan and will be used to guide development-related decisions in the community. The update will provide a long-term vision for the Town, and through its implementation policies, indicate how that vision may be achieved over time. The Corte Madera General Plan addresses planning through the year 2025.

Consistent with the requirements of State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, the following provides a project description of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Town of Corte Madera General Plan.

### 3.1 LOCAL AND REGIONAL SETTING

The Town of Corte Madera Planning Area consists of approximately 2,500 acres, or four square miles, plus 400 acres of additional lands outside the Town limits which encompass open space lands within Marin County and waters of the San Francisco Bay. Corte Madera is located in Marin County, approximately nine miles north of San Francisco, with its eastern border on the San Francisco Bay and its western edge bordered by unincorporated Marin County lands. Mount Tamalpais lies immediately west, and adjacent to Corte Madera are the Cities of Larkspur to the north and Mill Valley to the south and the Town of Tiburon to the southeast. Highway 101 bisects the Town (see **Figure 3.0-1**).

The effective Planning Area boundary for the General Plan is coterminous with the Town's Sphere of Influence, which includes all lands within the incorporated Town limits, as well as a large area within San Francisco Bay (east of the Town limits), lands just beyond the southern Town limit near Tiburon and the Ring Mountain Open Space Preserve, and the area encompassed by the Greenbrae Boardwalk area at the north edge of the Town near Highway 101 and the northern edge of the Corte Madera State Ecological Reserve.

The Town is largely built out, with only a few undeveloped parcels that are not otherwise classified as open space or environmentally preserved lands. The existing land use pattern is a mix of distinct residential neighborhoods and commercial centers, combined with parks and open spaces. Specific areas characterizing the Town include two regional shopping centers, a Town Civic Center, Historic Old Corte Madera Square and Menke Park, and residential neighborhoods characterized by detached, single-family residences, multi-family residential units, and upslope single-family homes built on steep terrain with winding residential streets. Open space areas include the Corte Madera State Ecological Reserve, tidal marshlands, and Marin County Open Space Preserves. The Town does not plan to annex any of these open space lands, which total approximately 400 acres, within the foreseeable future. The Town limits and Sphere of Influence are shown in **Figure 3.0-2**.

The Town of Corte Madera encompasses several different habitat types and environmental features that divide the Town into distinctive areas. The San Francisco Bay and tidal marsh areas comprise the northern and eastern boundaries of the Town. The San Francisco Bay supports several different habitat types including saline emergent wetland and lacustrine habitats. The San Francisco Bay tidal marshes are protected by state, federal, and local laws that have been enacted to regulate development activities in ecologically valuable areas. The ridgeline and terrestrial areas of the Town comprise the western and southern portions of the Town. These areas support coastal oak woodland and annual grassland, coastal scrub, and montane hardwood-conifer, as well as eucalyptus grove and coastal scrub. The primary ridges are the Corte Madera Ridge, Meadowsweet Ridge, Chapman Hill, Christmas Tree Hill, and the Tiburon Peninsula Ridge. Additional wetland habitats within the Town include open waters such as San Clemente Creek, Corte Madera Creek, and various creeks and seasonal streams which are located throughout the Town.

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#### **3.2 BACKGROUND OF PLANNING ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TOWN**

##### **TOWN OF CORTE MADERA GENERAL PLAN**

The adoption of the 1989 Corte Madera General Plan articulated a broad community consensus of Town planning issues, ratifying policies that protected the Town's predominant land use character of low-density residential neighborhoods. Open space was permanently preserved with effective land use controls. Policies were developed for sites of particular importance to the community, such as Old Corte Madera Square, Triangular Marsh, and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad properties.

The community's social and economic make-up has continued to evolve since the 1989 Plan was adopted, with a demographic shift in the 1990s as young families with children moved into the community. Property values in 2005 nearly tripled their 1989 sales prices. Corte Madera has experienced a positive economic trend that is reflected in a robust capital improvement program keeping roads in good repair and continuing improvements to the Town's flood and drainage system. With regard to the natural environment, there is a growing interest in the concept of "sustainability," and the community expects a more proactive approach to managing natural resources.

##### **CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS POTENTIALLY AFFECTING THE TOWN OF CORTE MADERA PLANNING AREA**

There are currently two approved residential and/or mixed-use projects within the Planning Area, encompassing approximately 5 acres. The residential developments consist of eight proposed dwelling units on 1.23 acres (Casa Buena Drive) and 79 dwelling units proposed for mixed use on 3.51 acres on San Clemente Drive (San Clemente Family Housing & Self Storage). The project on San Clemente Drive is expected to be complete and occupied at the time the General Plan is released for public comment.

In addition to the developments within the Town limits, there are developments occurring within the adjacent cities and unincorporated County that could potentially affect the Town. For a description of each of these developments, please refer to Section 4.0, Introduction to the Environmental Analysis and Assumptions Used.

#### **3.3 PROPOSED TOWN OF CORTE MADERA GENERAL PLAN**

The Town of Corte Madera is required to periodically update its General Plan that acts as the official policy statement of the Town and guides public and private development within the Town in a manner which maximizes the social and economic benefit for all citizens. In addition, the proposed updated Town of Corte Madera General Plan will provide policy direction that will guide the land use development within the Town, as well as the preservation of existing natural resources.

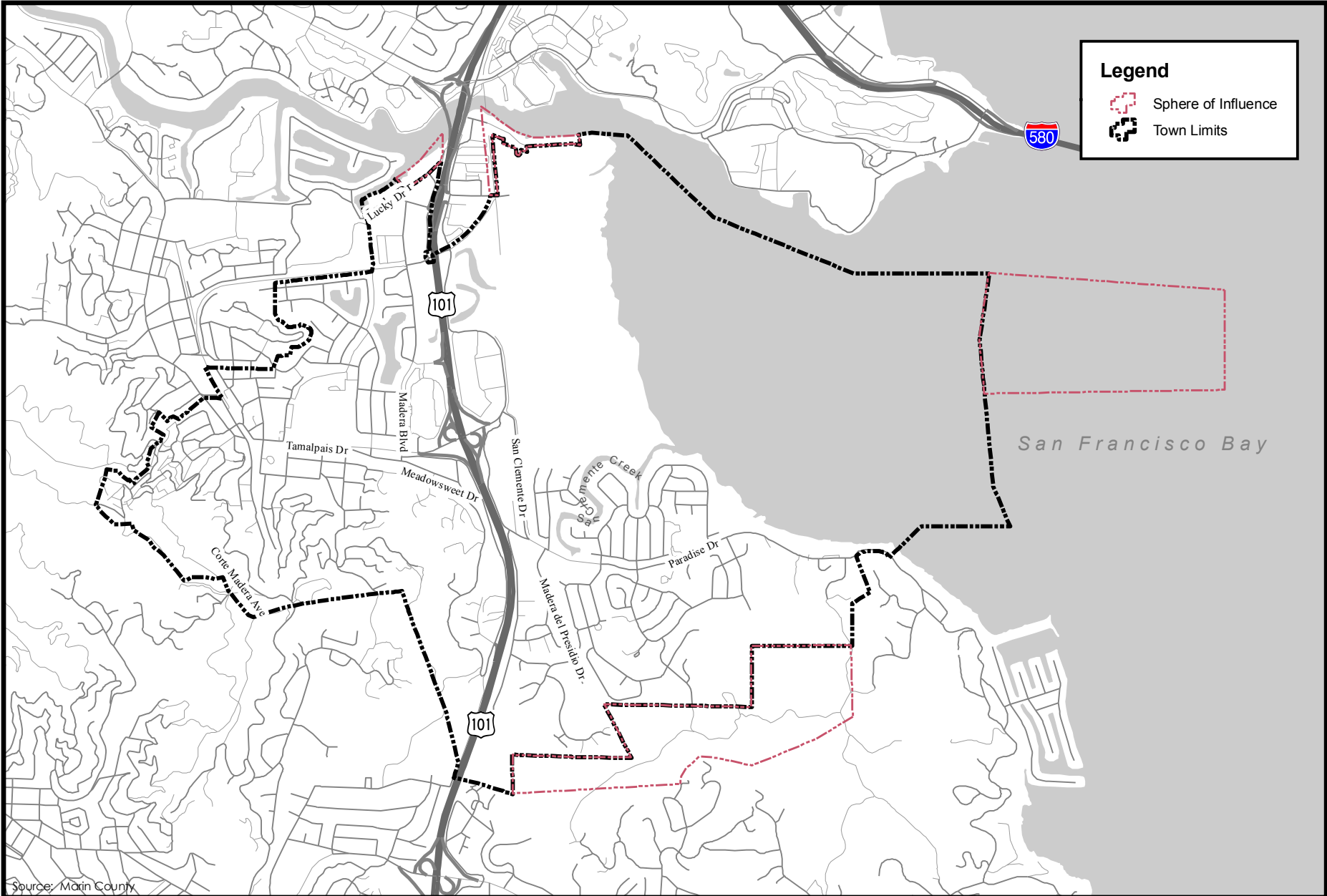
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**Figure 3.0-1**  
Regional Location Map

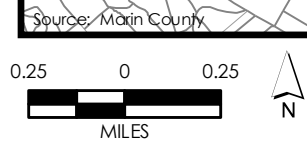


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**Legend**

- Sphere of Influence
- Town Limits



**Figure 3.0-2**  
Corte Madera City Limits and Sphere of Influence  
**PMC**



### **Project Objectives**

The following are the project objectives for the proposed General Plan Update as identified by the Town:

- Provide a rational, comprehensive system for managing the physical development of the Town and the delivery of local government services.
- Maintain and enhance Corte Madera's character as a small community in a cosmopolitan setting by protecting the Town's predominant pattern of low-density residential neighborhoods.
- Promote strategies that conserve, renew, and enhance natural resources and avoid irreversible harm to sensitive environmental systems beyond their capacity to sustain human life.
- Promote the orderly redevelopment of commercial areas on the 101 corridor to mixed use including housing, retail, commercial service, and office uses.
- Develop a Town-wide system of safe, efficient, and attractive automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian routes for commuter, recreational, and everyday use that effectively links the neighborhoods to commercial centers, schools, parks, and other key activity centers.
- Provide a policy basis for developing and implementing design guidelines that will recognize the unique character of Corte Madera's neighborhoods and ensure that residential, non-residential, and infrastructure projects enhance the visual makeup of the community.
- Provide for residents' commercial service and retail shopping needs and promote business retention and development to enhance the Town's tax base.
- Establish policies and implementation programs to protect the Town from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, fire, and environmental hazards.

### **Principal Themes of the Proposed General Plan Update**

The proposed General Plan Update promotes enhancement as an underlying theme for maintaining the Town's small community identity in a cosmopolitan setting and preservation of its many natural resources through increased community awareness and improved public access. The General Plan provides an opportunity to enhance the livability of the community by improving the physical connectivity between the east and west sides of Town, and by including pedestrian-oriented public areas, affordable housing, convenient public transit, safe bicycle and pedestrian routes, and accessible parks and open space areas. Policies to allow mixed-use development along with commercial expansion are important initiatives in the General Plan, along with promoting community sustainability by enhancing natural resources in protected open spaces.

Of particular importance to the community is the implementation of several key programs proposed in the General Plan Update. These include:

- Preparation of Community Area Plans for Old Corte Madera Square, the Paradise/San Clemente Drive area, the Fifer Avenue/Tamal Vista Boulevard area, and the Tamalpais Drive/Casa Buena Drive area.
- Completion of the San Francisco Bay Trail and other trail improvements.

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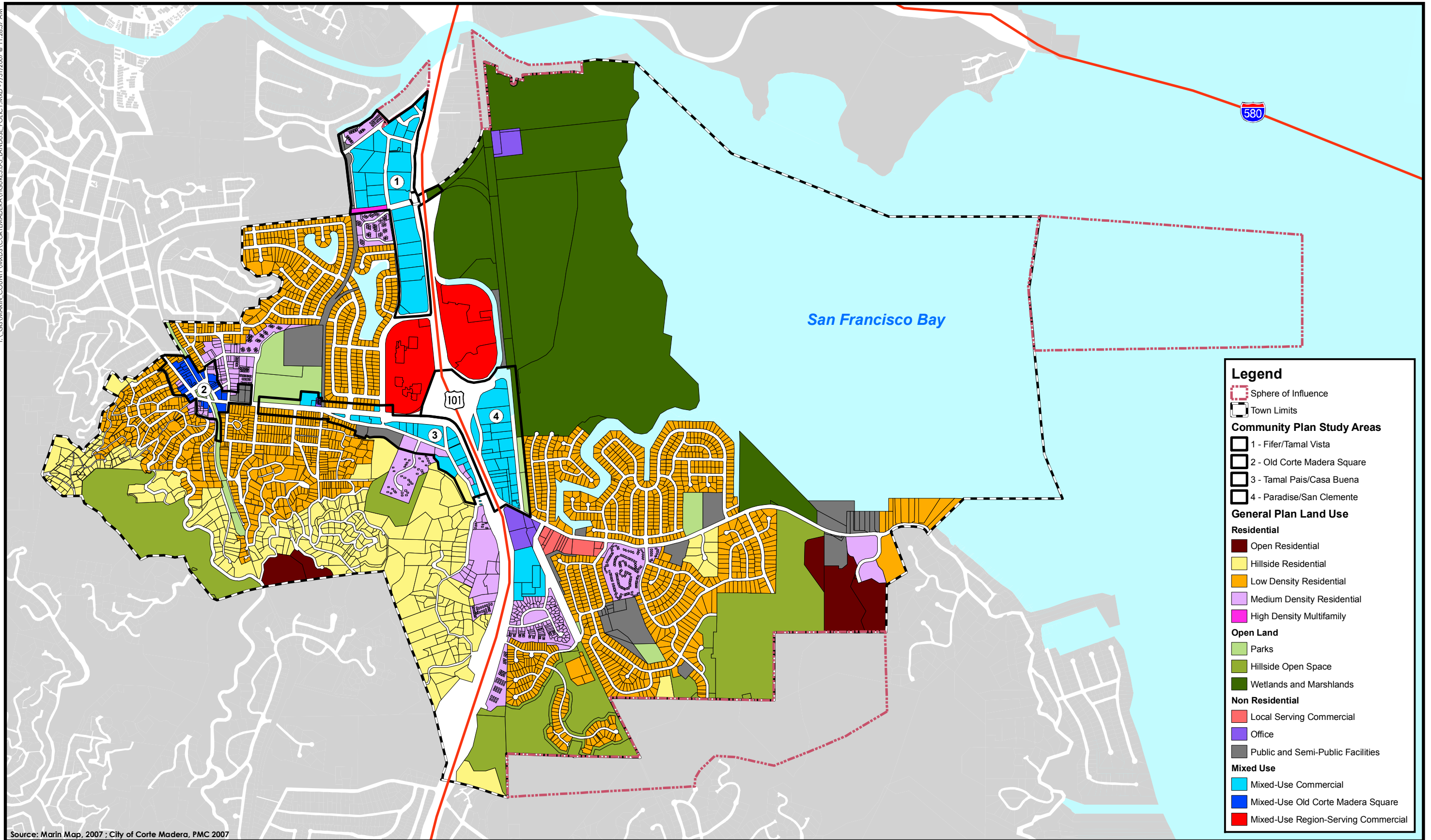
- Completion of Town Design Guidelines for residential and non-residential development, and for infrastructure.
- Construction of gateway design features at prominent locations in the Town.
- Completion of an update to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Construction of boulevard features as part of the reconstruction of San Clemente Drive.
- Expansion of the Recreation Center facilities and/or inclusion of a Community Center to coincide with the completion of a Parks and Recreation Facility Master Plan.

#### COMPONENTS OF THE TOWN OF CORTE MADERA GENERAL PLAN

##### Updated General Plan Land Use Policy Map

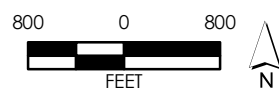
The updated General Plan Land Use Policy Map is a detailed land use plan for the Town of Corte Madera (see **Figure 3.0-3**). This updated land use policy map is different from the existing General Plan map in several respects. Specifically, the updated map includes four new Community Plan Areas, which will be further developed after adoption of the new General Plan, and identifies 15 land use designations to describe typical land uses accommodated within the Town (see **Figures 3.0-4** through **3.0-7**). With one exception, these land use designations vary only slightly from the existing General Plan's 16 designations. The exception is a new land use designation titled "Mixed Use Region-Serving Commercial" which would be applied to the Village and Town Center shopping centers. This designation would permit a floor area ratio (FAR) of up to 0.60. The current maximum allowed FAR for these properties is 0.34. Some of the residential land uses have been renamed to better capture the Town's definition of uses; non-residential and mixed-use categories accommodate the Community Plan Areas and further identify commercial uses. The updated map identifies land use designations through the use of color coding for ease of reference.

The General Plan proposes Community Plans for Old Corte Madera Square, the Fifer/Tamal Vista area, the Paradise/San Clemente area, and the Tamalpais Drive/Casa Buena Drive area. The Community Plans would include plans for future infill development, consistent in scale and character with the existing buildings. The Community Plans would include expansion of existing uses to include residential units to enhance the area's activity and provide additional housing opportunities. Additionally, several of the Community Plans will identify opportunities for high-density and multi-unit residential uses. The four Community Plans would be completed after the Town of Corte Madera General Plan is adopted. However, this EIR assumes the land uses within the Community Plan areas will be as stated in the various land use designations that are described in the General Plan Update. Additionally, one or more of the Community Plans may be adopted as amendments to the General Plan Update.



**Legend**

- Sphere of Influence
- Town Limits
- Community Plan Study Areas**
  - 1 - Fifer/Tamal Vista
  - 2 - Old Corte Madera Square
  - 3 - Tamal Pais/Casa Buena
  - 4 - Paradise/San Clemente
- General Plan Land Use**
- Residential**
  - Open Residential
  - Hillside Residential
  - Low Density Residential
  - Medium Density Residential
  - High Density Multifamily
- Open Land**
  - Parks
  - Hillside Open Space
  - Wetlands and Marshlands
- Non Residential**
  - Local Serving Commercial
  - Office
  - Public and Semi-Public Facilities
- Mixed Use**
  - Mixed-Use Commercial
  - Mixed-Use Old Corte Madera Square
  - Mixed-Use Region-Serving Commercial



**Figure 3.0-3**  
Land Use Policy Map  
PMC



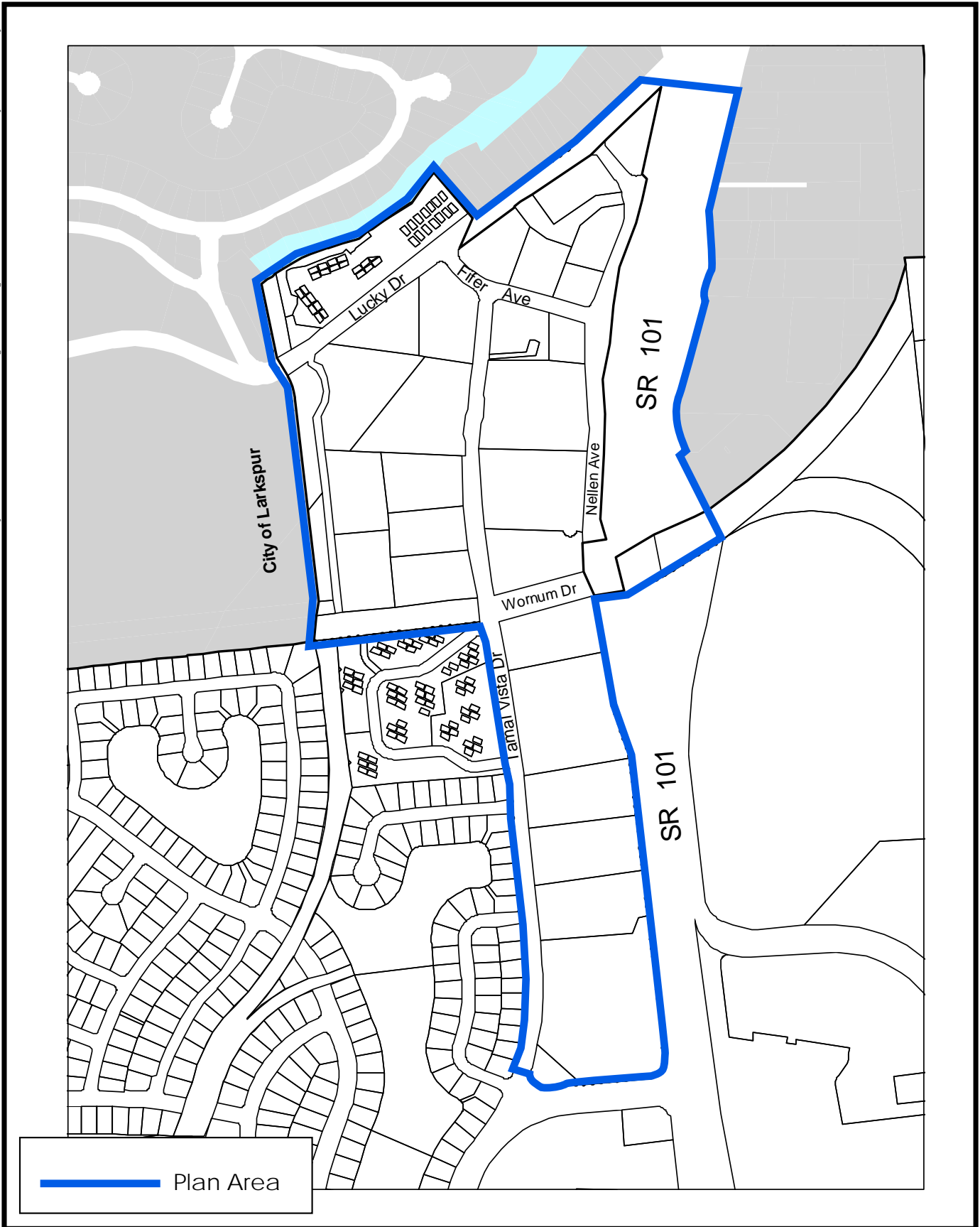


Figure 3.0-4  
Fifer - Tamal Vista Community Plan Area



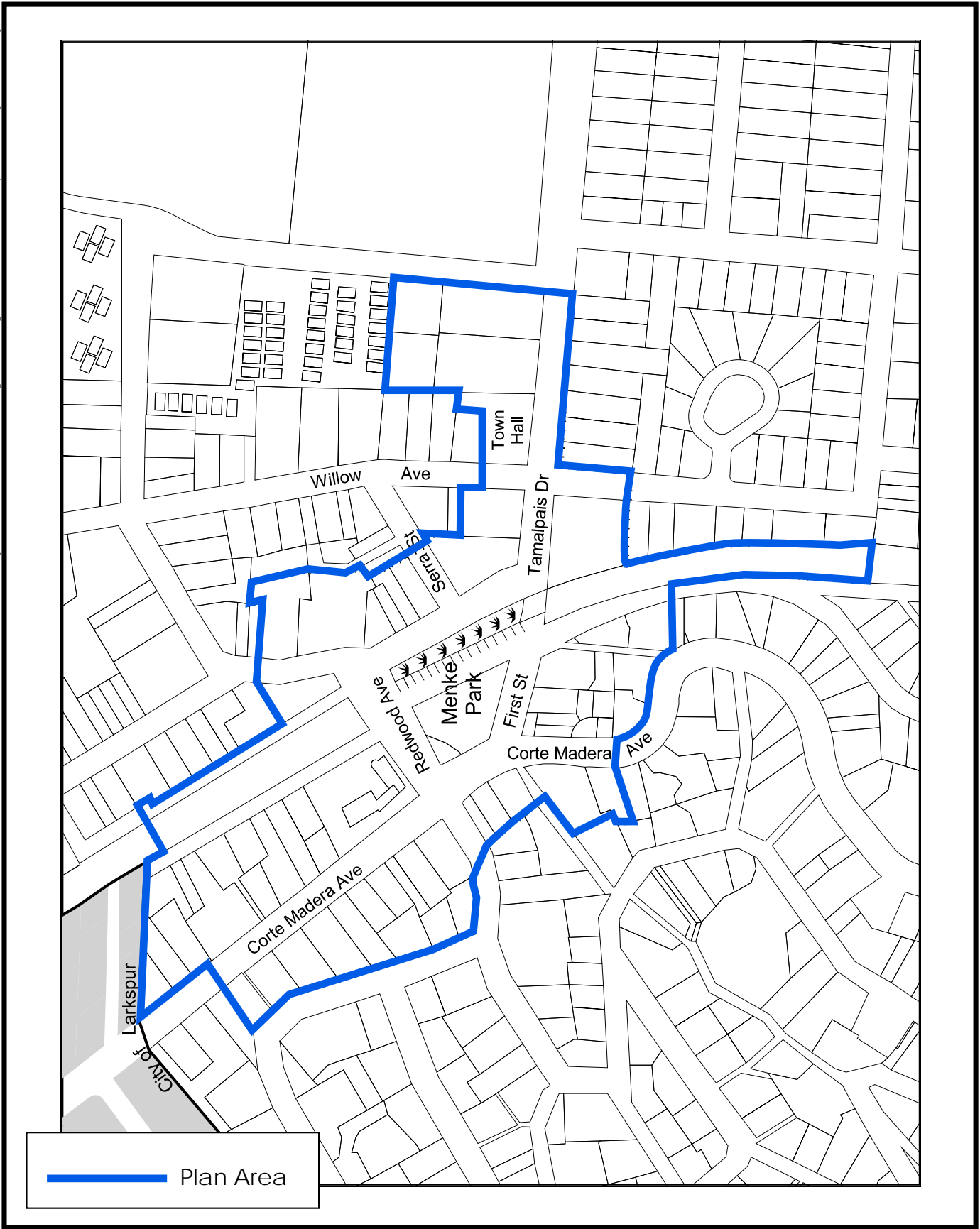


Figure 3.0-5  
Old Corte Madera Square Community Plan Area



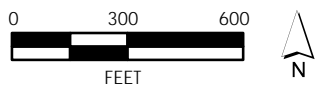
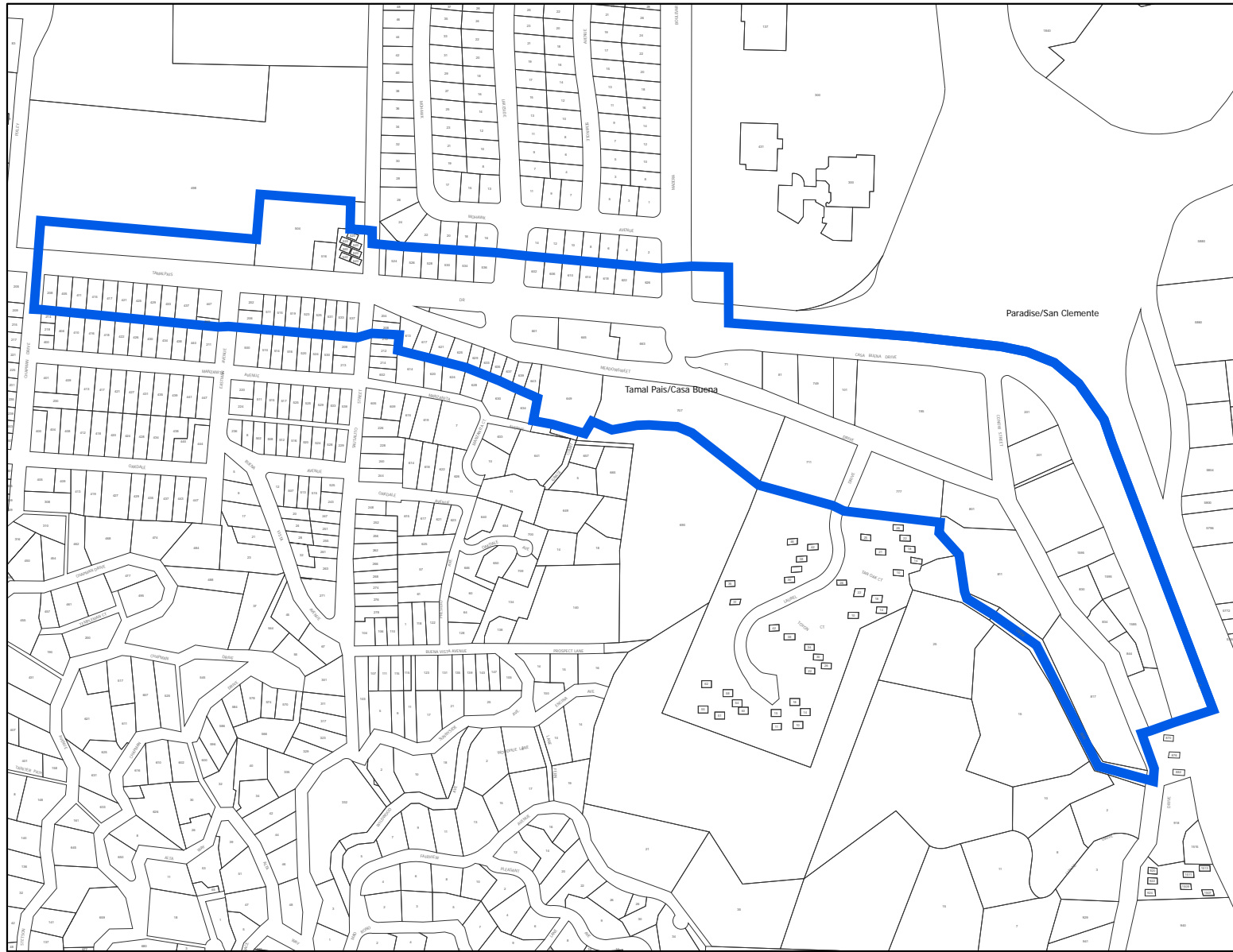


Figure 3.0-6  
Tamalpais/Casa Buena Community Plan Area





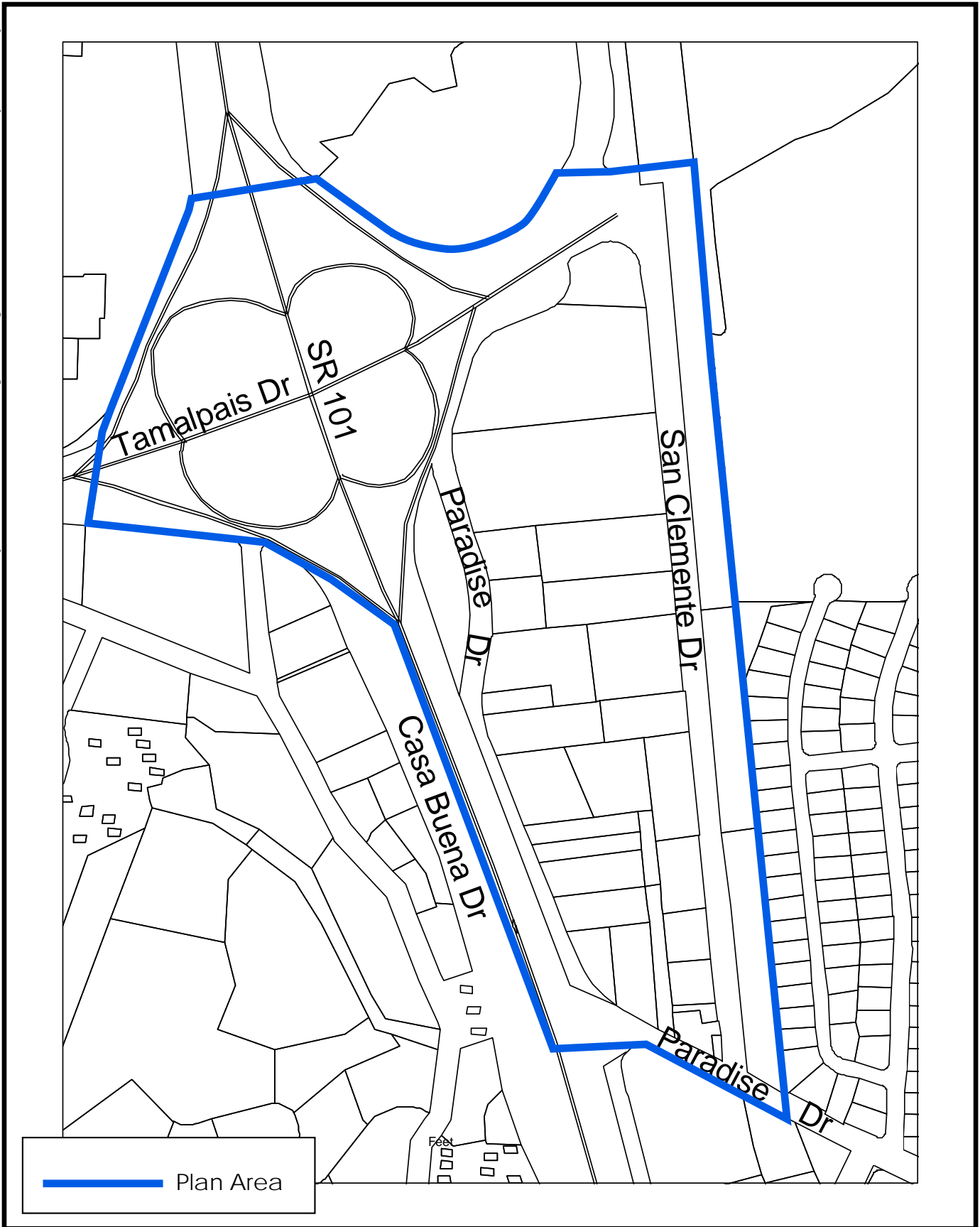


Figure 3.0-7  
Paradise - San Clemente Community Plan Area



**Table 3.0-1** summarizes the proposed buildout projections of the proposed General Plan Update under the General Plan Land Use Map. For this EIR, the General Plan Update is considered to be the Town's buildout at year 2025. **Table 3.0-2** summarizes buildout of the proposed General Plan by land use type. The buildout of the General Plan would consist of the increase in floor area ratio (FAR) for commercial development in the two regional shopping centers (the Village and the Town Center) and infill development (218 units).

**TABLE 3.0-1  
SUMMARY OF EXISTING AND GENERAL PLAN BUILDOUT CONDITIONS**

Land Uses	Town of Corte Madera Planning Area		
	Existing	Year 2025	Project Buildout
Residential Units	3,900	4,118	4,118
Population	9,400	9,917	9,917
Total Square Footage	7,263,379	7,922,379	7,922,379
Commercial and Office	2,465,613	3,124,613	3,124,613

Source: Town of Corte Madera and the proposed Town of Corte Madera Land Use Map

Note: Buildout projections under the entire Planning Area include the entire Town of Corte Madera.

**TABLE 3.0-2  
PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION ACREAGES WITHIN THE TOWN LIMITS**

Land Use	Acreages
Open Residential	43
Hillside Residential	192
Low-Density Residential	507
Medium-Density Residential	38
High-Density Residential	1
Local Serving Commercial	12
Office	2
Mixed-Use Region-Serving Commercial	59
Mixed-Use Old Corte Madera Square	5
Mixed-Use Commercial	79
Public and Semi-Public Facilities	77
Parks	93
Water Bodies and Waterways	788
Wetlands and Marshlands	440
Hillside Open Space	159
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,495</b>

Source: General Plan Land Use Map, 2004

### 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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**Table 3.0-3** summarizes the vacant lands in Corte Madera used to determine the number of potential units under the General Plan Update. No floor area ratios (FARs) have been assigned to the Community Plan areas, with the exception of Old Corte Madera Square. With the implementation of the General Plan Update policies, there would be no change to the existing FARs. However, studies for the Community Plan may assign a range of higher FARs to allow mixed-use and higher density development, which would require an amendment of the proposed General Plan and additional CEQA review. Currently, all sites in the Community Plan areas are built out.

**TABLE 3.0-3  
SUMMARY OF VACANT LANDS IN CORTE MADERA**

<b>General Plan Designations</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>No. of Parcels</b>
High Density Residential (11 to 25 units/ acre)	1.5	1
Multi-Family Residential (from 5.8 to 10.9 units/net acre; higher densities possible for senior housing)	1.70	1
Low-Density Residential (from 1.0 to 2.2 units/ net acre)	62.76	22
Open residential (from 0 to 0.2 units/ acre)	33.52	4
Commercial Services	1.82	2
Public Facilities	1.21	1
Parks/Hillsides/Wetland	562.74	28
<b>Total Acreage of Vacant Lands</b>	<b>665.25</b>	

#### **General Plan Document**

The General Plan is in two volumes: the Background Report and the General Plan Policy Document.

The updated Town of Corte Madera General Plan Policy Document is divided into eight chapters, which consist of an introduction and seven elements: Land Use, Resource Conservation and Sustainability, Community Design, Circulation, Parks and Recreation, Flooding and Flood Plain Management, and Public Safety and Hazards. These chapters are summarized below. The reader is referred to the policy document for further details on the content.

#### Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the scope and role of the General Plan, including document organization and the definitions of goals, policies, and implementation programs. The Introduction does not contain any elements, but characterizes the community and Town setting.

#### Chapter 2 – Land Use

This chapter includes the required Land Use Element and references the Housing Element and establishes the framework for the goals, policies, and implementation programs that will guide

the Town's physical form and growth over the next 20 years. It addresses the intensity and distribution of land uses, as well as population, demographics and housing, and provision of public services and facilities. This chapter also addresses the four Community Plans and the increased floor area ratio (FAR) for the Town's two regional shopping centers (the Village and the Town Center).

### Chapter 3 – Resource Conservation and Sustainability

This chapter includes the required Conservation and Open Space elements and includes policies and programs that promote community sustainability through effective management of renewable and non-renewable natural resources. This chapter also includes new implementation programs that address Native American resources.

### Chapter 4 – Circulation

This chapter provides Town policies for all types of transportation in Corte Madera: vehicles (auto and truck), public transit, bicycling, pedestrian, and ferry. The Circulation chapter defines the level of service that the Town will seek to maintain on roadways. The Circulation chapter identifies proposed circulation improvements to the Town including improving pedestrian/bicycle connectivity between the east and west sides of the Town, improving Highway 101 access and safety, improvements to San Clemente Drive, implementation of the bicycle circulation improvements identified in Town's Bicycle Transportation Plan, and improvements to pedestrian circulation throughout the Town including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Circulation chapter also includes improvements to trails within the Town.

### Chapter 5 – Community Design

This chapter includes an optional element, Community Design, which addresses the desired visual character of the Town's natural and built environments.

### Chapter 6 – Parks and Recreation

This chapter includes the required Open Space element as well as the optional Parks and Recreation element. It provides the policy-level foundation for maintaining and enhancing the Town's existing programs and facilities, preserving open space areas, and planning for the expansion of Town-wide trails. The Parks and Recreation chapter identifies proposed parks and recreation improvements to the Town including remodeling or replacing the Town Recreation Center, developing a Parks and Recreation Program and Facilities Master Plan, and providing improvements to the Town's trail system including paving trails and providing special access.

### Chapter 7 – Flooding and Flood Plain Management

This chapter includes an optional element, Flooding, and is intended to reduce hazards by continuing to reinforce the Town's existing flood control programs and to provide a policy basis for exploring new, long-range approaches to further reduce risk. The Flooding and Flood Plain Management chapter identifies anticipated flood management improvements to the Town including the development of a comprehensive Storm Drainage Master Plan.

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#### Chapter 8 – Public Safety and Hazards

This chapter includes the required Noise and Safety elements, which identify and appraise noise and safety problems within the Town to establish land use patterns that minimize exposure to excessive natural and man-made hazards. It also establishes policies and implementation programs that will protect the Town from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, fire, and other environmental hazards.

#### Town of Corte Madera Housing Element

California Government Code Sections 65580-65589.8 require that all municipalities adopt and implement a Housing Element as part of their General Plan, to identify and review existing and projected housing needs and to form a plan for meeting those needs. The Housing Element is required to be updated every five years.

The Town of Corte Madera adopted its current Housing Element in August 2002. Although separately bound, the Housing Element is an integral part of the General Plan and contains all of the policies and actions mandated by the State of California.

### **3.4 SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN**

After the adoption of the updated General Plan by the Town of Corte Madera, all subsequent activities and development within the Town will be subject to the policies set forth in the new plan. Some of the activities include residential or mixed-use developments that would be subject to tentative map and design review approval. All commercial, office, and industrial uses would be subject to tentative map, design review, and use permit approval. Other public activities, such as public uses including parks, roadway improvements, and infrastructure including drainage, sewer, and water, are required to coordinate with the Corte Madera General Plan.

### **3.5 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS, PERMITS, AND APPROVALS**

This EIR may be used for both direct and indirect actions.

#### TOWN OF CORTE MADERA

The Town of Corte Madera General Plan will be presented to the Town of Corte Madera Planning Commission for comment, review, and recommendations. The Town of Corte Madera Town Council, as the Town's legislative body, is the approving authority for the Town of Corte Madera General Plan. As part of the Plan's approval, the Town Council will take the following actions:

- Certification of the Town of Corte Madera General Plan EIR.
- Adoption of required findings for the above action, including required findings under the State CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15090, 15091, and 15093.
- Adoption of the Town of Corte Madera General Plan.
- Adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP).

Subsequent actions that may be taken by the Town regarding the project include, but are not limited to:

- Revisions to the Town of Corte Madera Municipal Code, including the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, to update existing ordinances ensuring consistency with the General Plan, including land uses, lot sizes, uses, and floor area ratios.
- Amendment to the Tree Ordinance, relative to view preservation, to coincide with policies in the General Plan addressing views.
- Adoption of Design Guidelines for residential and non-residential development and for infrastructure.
- Adoption of a surcharge fee that would be applied to all development applications to fund the maintenance of and updates to the General Plan, Specific Plans, chapters of the Municipal Code regulating development, and preparation of Design Guidelines.
- Preparation of Community Area Plans for the Old Corte Madera Square, San Clemente Drive/Paradise Drive, Fifer Avenue/Tamal Vista Boulevard, and Tamalpais Drive/Casa Buena Drive areas.
- Provision of infill development, including implementation of an infill application review process that utilizes permit streamlining.

#### OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY APPROVALS

Additional subsequent approvals and permits that may be required from local, regional, state, and federal agencies include, but are not limited to:

- The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) approval of dust control plans and other permits for subsequent projects.
- The Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) approval of any development in shoreline areas. Filling, dredging, new construction, major remodeling, changes in land use, and subdivisions are subject to review and approval by the BCDC.
- The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), which is responsible for interregional transportation services, including highways. Highway 101, which bisects Corte Madera, is a Caltrans-maintained highway. Land use changes along the Highway 101 corridor are subject to review by Caltrans.
- The California Public Utilities Commission, which regulates privately owned electric, telecommunications, natural gas, water, and transportation companies.
- The California State Lands Commission approval of any activity on all lands owned and entrusted to the state, including riverbeds, sloughs, lakes, and coastline.
- The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) approval of any activity impacting Planning Area water features, pursuant to the Clean Water Act and RWQCB standards.

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- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), publishes Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), and requires adherence to flood plain management policies that represent sound land use practices.
- The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) approval of potential future streambed alteration agreements, pursuant to Fish and Game Code. Approval of any future potential take of state-listed wildlife and plant species covered under the California Endangered Species Act.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approval of any future wetland fill activities, pursuant to the Clean Water Act.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) approvals involving any future potential take of federally listed wildlife and plant species and their habitats covered under the Federal Endangered Species Act.